



# Addressing Infrastructure Needs in The Blue Mountains

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AMO Delegation – Ministry of Infrastructure

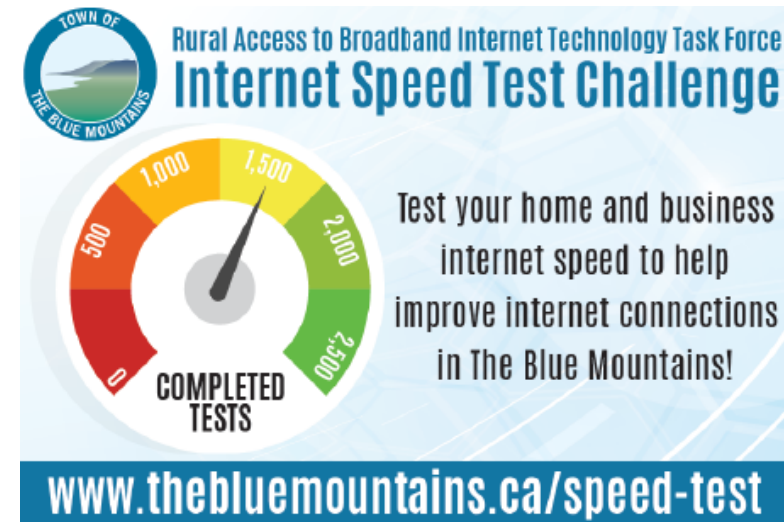
August 16, 2022

# Topics for Discussion

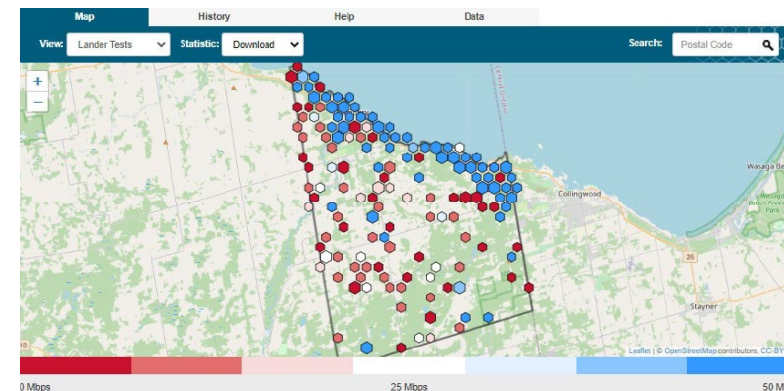
1. Rural Broadband Internet and ASHIP Program
2. Ontario One Call – Locate Issues
3. Infrastructure Investment to Support Growth
4. Red Tape Reduction

# 1. Rural Broadband Internet

- In 2020, the Town established a task force focused on the development, implementation and progress monitoring of sustainable solutions for rural broadband internet service in the community.
- To gain data, the Town partnered with the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) in 2021 to conduct a Town wide Internet Speed Test Challenge.
- Like many rural communities, The Blue Mountains is primarily serviced by large scale internet providers that are focused on serving urban and densely populated areas. Little attention is given to servicing rural areas.
- Due to the lack of focus on servicing rural areas, municipalities must make their own action plan to ensure that residents have access to fast and reliable internet. To date, the Task Force has held individual meetings with local Internet Service Providers to further discuss opportunities and obstacles related to provision of broadband internet. The meetings have helped identify key areas of concern, such as the delay obtaining locates.



The graphic features the Town of The Blue Mountains logo on the left. To its right is the title "Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology Task Force Internet Speed Test Challenge". Below the title is a circular speedometer with a needle pointing to approximately 1,500. The speedometer is divided into color-coded segments: 0-500 (red), 500-1,000 (orange), 1,000-1,500 (yellow), 1,500-2,000 (light green), and 2,000-2,500 (dark green). The text "COMPLETED TESTS" is written across the bottom of the speedometer. To the right of the speedometer, the text reads "Test your home and business internet speed to help improve internet connections in The Blue Mountains!". At the bottom, a dark blue banner contains the URL "www.thebluemountains.ca/speed-test".



# ASHIP Program

- The Town would like to thank Ministry staff, specifically Brett Smith, for taking the opportunity to meet with members of the Town's Rural Access to Broadband Internet Taskforce.
- As of Tuesday, August 9, 2022, the Town has responded to the Ministries questionnaire relating to the AHSIP Program that was due on August 19, 2022.
- The Town is excited to work collaboratively with Rogers as the successful bidder of Block 51 that the entire municipality is located within.

## Ministry Request

The Town requests that the Ministry work with rural municipalities to develop a consistent and project-based program that expedites the installation of fibre internet throughout rural areas, and that the Ministry establishes a defined set of criteria for the consideration of Telecommunication that includes the priority to have Telecommunication towers being serviced and connected to fibre internet.

## 2. Ontario One Call – Locate Issues

- Both the Town and local businesses have experienced delays obtaining locates due to the current structure of the *Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification Act*;
- As required by the Act, the Town conducts locates services for buried infrastructure and has hired full-time staff to ensure that the five-day requirement is met;
- However, the Town has experienced delays in obtaining locates which has resulted in delays with construction projects and capital infrastructure projects.
  - Non-compliance from other utility owners often leads to expiration of locate details which requires the Town's Locate Technician to re-establish locate information for the same project resulting in duplication of work and shifting of Town priorities so compliance can be maintained.

### Ministry Request

The Town of The Blue Mountains requests that the Ministry enforces and maintains Ontario One Call compliance with the five-day requirement of the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification Act.

# 3. Infrastructure Investment to Support Growth

## Town of the Blue Mountains is the 2nd Fastest Growing Community in Canada (2022 Census)

- Experiencing significant capacity strain on existing infrastructure due to the rate of growth and related tourism and economic development pressures.

## Approved Asset Management Plans

- Ahead of the deadlines, the Town has established integrated Asset Management Plans for all asset classes.
- Not only is growth driving the need for additional infrastructure capacity, but the Town is also focused on ensuring that infrastructure is properly maintained to meet the level of service needs in the community.

## Investment to Support Growth, Maintain Infrastructure and Support Economic Development

- The Town needs to invest approximately \$138 million over the next five years to address both Asset Management Plans and growth-related requirements. To achieve this, the Town will need financial assistance and funding from the Province to undertake key projects such as:
  - Water and Wastewater Reconstruction Projects - \$129 Million
  - Landfill Expansion and Upgrades - \$5.5 Million
  - Roads and Bridges - \$14.4 Million

# Provincial Commitment to Infrastructure Investment

- The mandate and focus of the Province to invest in infrastructure to build a strong economy, aligns with the efforts of the Town.
- Infrastructure investments in The Blue Mountains will allow the Town to continue to serve as a key economic driver for both tourism and agriculture in Ontario.
  - The Town welcomes over 2.5 million visitors annually with tourism related jobs representing over 21% of total tourism jobs within Grey County.
  - The Town accounts for over 15% of total acres of apple crop in the Province and 14% of total agricultural jobs within Grey County.

***“Ontario cannot afford to hold its economy back. Now is the time to build.” (Throne Speech, August 9, 2022)***

***“Getting shovels in the ground on critical infrastructure projects is part of the Ontario government’s plan to build strong and resilient communities, stimulating job creation and boosting economic growth while protecting health and safety.” (Provincial News Release, April 14, 2022)***

## Ministry Request

To help support and maintain a vibrant community, the Town requests that the Ministry continues to provide grant and funding opportunities to support infrastructure investments and that the Ministry reviews and considers the impact to local municipalities when implementing Provincial directions.

## 4. Red Tape Reduction

The ability to support infrastructure needs in an efficient, timely and cost-effective manner has been hampered by the roll-out of the Excess Soils Regulation and delays in implementing new measures in the Class Environmental Assessment process

- Excess Soils Regulation has created additional costs and delays for each infrastructure project. The roll-out of this new regulation has been challenging for all municipalities in understanding the specific requirements, obligations of the Town and risk management.
- The Municipal Class EA process requires implementation of the de-streaming committed to by the provincial government. Focus needs to be placed on infrastructure projects with more significant environmental, economic and social impact and reduce process-burden on projects where outcomes that are easily known and understood



# Summary - Requests for Consideration

## **1. Rural Broadband Internet**

The Town requests that the Ministry work with rural municipalities to develop a consistent and project-based program that expedites the installation of fibre internet throughout rural areas, and that the Ministry establishes a defined set of criteria for the consideration of Telecommunication that includes the priority to have Telecommunication towers being serviced and connected to fibre internet.

## **2. Ontario One Call**

The Town requests that the Ministry enforces and maintains Ontario One Call compliance with the five-day requirement of the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification Act.

## **3. Infrastructure Investment to Support Growth & Red Tape Reduction**

To help support and maintain a vibrant community, the Town requests that the Ministry continues to provide grant and funding opportunities to support infrastructure investments and that the Ministry reviews and considers the impact to local municipalities when implementing Provincial directions.



**Questions?**